

ROSARY HAVING AUDIBLE AND/OR VISUAL INDICATORS AND RELATED METHODS

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to religious articles and, more specifically, to a rosary including an indicator, and associated methods.

Background of the Invention

[0002] A rosary may generally comprise a flexible elongate member, such as a string, carrying a plurality of beads. The flexible elongate member may be arranged in a loop, and the plurality of beads may be used to keep track of the number or repetitious prayers recited by the user. The prayers to be recited by the user may change daily and throughout different times of the year, e.g., Advent or Easter, and may vary from bead to bead.

[0003] Accordingly, a prayer associated with a rosary may be difficult to learn and/or recite. Some devices have been introduced to assist a user in learning and reciting prayers associated with a rosary. U.S. Patent No. 6,540,519 to Wexler, for example, discloses a handheld apparatus for prompting and teaching a prayer associated with a rosary to a user. The handheld device includes a plurality of LEDs carried by a housing, and generates a user operable voice message corresponding to a portion of the prayer.

[0004] U.S. Patent No. 4,365,246 to De Wolf et al.

discloses a handheld rosary device that visually indicates prayer steps. More specifically, the handheld rosary includes a plurality of light emitting diodes (LEDs) configured in a matrix and carried by a housing. The LEDs may be configured to have characteristics indicative of various prayers. U.S. Patent No. 4,601,584 to DeWolf et al. discloses a similar rosary device that is carried by a wristwatch.

[0005] Once a user learns the prayer of the rosary, it may be difficult to keep track of the number of prayers that have been recited. U.S. Published Application No. 2003/0086521 to Rana discloses an electronic rosary including a plurality of beads and an alphanumeric display for counting various prayer recitations. More specifically, the alphanumeric display is responsive to a bead sensor that senses the passing of a bead past a predetermined location to advance the displayed number.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] In view of the foregoing background, it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a rosary for readily assisting a user in reciting and learning prayers associated with a rosary.

[0007] This and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention are provided by a rosary comprising a sensor and an indicator responsive to the sensor for providing an indication to assist a user in reciting and learning prayers associated with the rosary. More specifically, the rosary includes a flexible elongate member and a plurality of beads carried thereby, at least one sensor, and an audible indicator carried by the flexible elongate member for providing an audible indication based upon the at least one sensor. The sensor and audible indicator advantageously assist a user in learning and reciting a prayer associated with the rosary and learning and

reciting various prayers corresponding to the plurality of beads.

[0008] The flexible elongate member may be arranged in a loop and with a leg extending outwardly therefrom. The audible indicator may be carried at a junction between the loop and leg. The sensor may be carried by the audible indicator in some embodiments.

[0009] The plurality of beads may comprise sets of beads separated by respective transition beads carried by the flexible elongate member. Accordingly, sensors may also be carried by the transition beads.

[0010] The sensor may sense user contact, or a voice of a user, for example. Accordingly, the user may advantageously selectively activate the rosary by contact or voice, depending upon the setting. For example, the user may want to activate the rosary by contact, rather than by voice, in a quiet environment.

[0011] The audible indicator may comprise a recorder for recording the audible indication, which may, for example, be a prayer. This advantageously allows the user to customize, or personalize, the rosary. The audible indicator may further comprise a timer for providing a different audible indication based upon a calendar date so that the user may advantageously learn different prayers corresponding to different days and calendar dates, e.g., Advent, Easter, etc.

[0012] The rosary may also comprise a visual indicator for providing a visual indication based upon the sensor. The visual indicator may also comprise a timer for providing a different visual indication based upon a particular day or a particular calendar date. The visual indication may comprise a religious image representing a corresponding prayer, for example, or prayer text to advantageously assist the user in learning prayers associated with the rosary.

[0013] The rosary may further comprise a switch for permitting user selection of at least one of the

audible and visual indication to advantageously allow a user to customize use of the rosary in different environments, e.g., a quiet environment.

[0014] A method aspect of the present invention is for providing an audible indication relating to a rosary. The method may comprise generating the audible indication from the audible indicator based upon the at least one sensor, as described above. Another method aspect of the present invention is for providing a visual indication relating to a rosary. The method may comprise generating the visual indication from the visual indicator based upon the at least one sensor, as described above.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0015] FIG. 1 is a schematic view of a rosary including an audible/visual indicator according to the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 2 is a more detailed schematic view of the audible/visual indicator shown in FIG. 1.

[0017] FIG. 3 is a schematic view of a rosary including an audible indicator according to the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 4 is a more detailed schematic view of the audible indicator shown in FIG. 3.

[0019] FIG. 5 is a schematic view of a rosary including a visual indicator according to the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 6 is a more detailed schematic view of the visual indicator shown in FIG. 5.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0021] The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should

not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout, and prime and double prime notations are used to indicate similar elements in alternate embodiments.

[0022] Referring initially to FIGS. 1-2, a rosary **15** according to the present invention is now described. The rosary **15** illustratively comprises a flexible elongate member **20** and a plurality of beads **22**. The rosary **15** also illustratively includes a plurality of sensors **24**, and an indicator **30** carried by the flexible elongate member **20** for providing an indication based upon the sensors.

[0023] The rosary **15** includes a housing **17**, and an audible/visual indicator **30** carried by the housing. The audible/visual indicator **30** advantageously selectively provides both an audible and a visual indication based upon the sensors **24**. As will be discussed in greater detail below, however, alternate embodiments of the rosary **15** may include an audible indicator **30'** (FIGS. 3-4) or a visual indicator **30''** (FIGS. 5-6).

[0024] The flexible elongate member **20** is illustratively arranged in a loop **21** and includes a leg **23** extending outwardly therefrom. A religious symbol **18**, such as a cross, for example, may be connected to an end of the leg **23**. The audible/visual indicator **30** is illustratively carried at a junction between the loop **21** and the leg **23**. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the audible/visual indicator **30** may also be carried along any other portion of the flexible elongate member **20**, the leg **23**, or on the religious symbol **18**. More specifically, the housing **17** may be shaped as the religious symbol **18** so that the

audible/visual indicator 30 is thereby carried by the religious symbol.

[0025] The plurality of beads 22 comprises sets of beads 25 separated by respective transition beads 27. Each set of beads 25 may, for example, comprise ten beads, or any other number of beads depending on the intended use, i.e., the desired prayers. Those skilled in the art will appreciate, however, that the beads 22 may have any other configuration. Each of the beads 22 may represent a particular prayer. Further, each set of beads 25 and respective transition beads 27 may represent a particular set of prayers. The leg 23, also known as the "small chain" may, for example, comprise three beads 22 and at least one transition bead 27 thereon. Again, those skilled in the art will appreciate, however, that the beads 22 on the leg 23 may also have any other configuration.

[0026] The sensors 24 are illustratively carried by the transition beads 27 and are connected to the audible/visual indicator 30. A sensor 24 may also illustratively be carried by the religious symbol 18. The connections between the sensors 24 and the audible/visual indicator 30 are schematically illustrated by the dashed lines. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the connection between the sensors 24 and the audible/visual indicator 30 may be made with a wire, for example, adjacent the flexible elongate member 20 and the leg 23. The flexible elongate member 20 and/or the leg 23 may, in some cases, be the wires for making the connection between the sensors 24 and the audible/visual indicator 30.

[0027] The sensors 24 are connected to a processor 35 carried by the audible/visual indicator 30. A power supply, such as a battery 29, is also carried by the audible/visual indicator 30 and connected to the processor 35.

[0028] Additionally, or alternately, the sensors 24 may be carried by the audible/visual indicator 30 (FIG. 2). In such a case, the sensors 24 may be a plurality of momentary contact switches 24a, 24d that may be selectively activated by the user to either provide an audible indication or a visual indication. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that any number of switches 24a, 24d may be provided. Each of the plurality of switches 24a, 24d may correspond to a prayer associated with the rosary 15. Greater details regarding the operation of the rosary 15 are provided below.

[0029] The audible/visual indicator 30 may be a medallion, or emblem, having religious indicia thereon. The transition beads 27, may be smaller than the audible/visual indicator 30, and may also be a medallion, or emblem having a similar shape to the audible/visual indicator 30. Of course, in such a case, the transition beads 27 will have a size that is smaller than the size of the audible/visual indicator 30. Those skilled in the art will appreciate, however, that the transition beads 27 may have any size and shape.

[0030] The plurality of switches 24a, 24d are connected to the processor 35 so that the audible/visual indicator 30 is responsive to activation of the switches. The sensors 24 carried by the transition beads 27 and the religious symbol 18 are also illustratively connected to the processor 35.

[0031] The sensors 24 may sense user contact. More specifically, the sensors 24 may be pressure sensors, heat sensors, or other types of sensors for sensing user contact, as understood by those skilled in the art.

[0032] One of the sensors 24 may, additionally or alternately, sense a voice of the user. In other

words, the voice of the user may activate the audible/visual indicator 30. The audible/visual indicator 30 may also include a recorder for recording the audible indication. Accordingly, the audible/visual indicator 30 may include a speaker/microphone 32 connected to the processor 35. The speaker/microphone 32 advantageously allows the user to activate the audible/visual indicator 30 based upon a user's voice, and also allows the user to customize, or personalize, the audible indication by recording a voice, such as the voice of a loved one, for example. The rosary 15 also comprises a memory 28 for storing an audible indication recorded by the user. The memory 28 is illustratively connected to the processor 35.

[0033] The audible/visual indicator 30 also includes a timer 34 for providing a different audible or visual indication based upon a calendar date. More particularly, the processor 35 implements a calendar function, such as using a crystal, as understood by those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the different audible or visual indications may relate to different calendar dates, such as Christmas or Easter, for example.

[0034] The audible indication may comprise a prayer, for example. The audible indication may also comprise an explanation of a set of prayers corresponding to a particular calendar date. The prayers may, for example, correspond to one of four Mysteries, such as the Joyful Mystery, the Sorrowful Mystery, the Glorious Mystery, and the Luminous Mystery. Each of the Mysteries may include corresponding prayer themes and prayers. Accordingly, the audible indication may be a recitation of the prayer theme or prayer corresponding to an appropriate Mystery, and may advantageously assist a user in reciting and learning the Mysteries, the prayer themes, and the associated prayers.

[0035] The visual indication may comprise a religious image, prayer text, or another image as understood by those skilled in the art. The religious image may be displayed on a visual display **40** connected to the processor **35**. The illustrated display **40** is divided into four sections **40a-40d**. Each of the sections illustrates one of the Mysteries described above. For example, a first one of the sections **40a** is illustrated as an illuminating "J" to represent the Joyful Mystery. Similarly, a second one of the sections **40b** is illustrated as an illuminating "S" to represent the Sorrowful Mystery; a third section **40c** is illustrated as an illuminating "G" to represent the Glorious Mystery; and a fourth section **40d** is illustrated as an illuminating "L" to represent the Luminous Mystery.

[0036] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that each of the transition beads **27** may also carry transition bead visual displays **41a-41e** so that the transition beads may be illuminated. More specifically, each of the transition bead visual displays **41a-41e** may permit the user to illuminate each of the transition beads **27**, or provide an illuminated image on each of the transition beads, or any other type of illumination, as understood by those skilled in the art.

[0037] Those skilled in the art will also appreciate that the illuminated image on the display **40** may also be a religious image. For example, the Joyful Mystery may be an illuminated baby, representing the nativity. The Sorrowful Mystery may be an illuminated cross, representing the crucifixion. The Glorious Mystery may be an illuminated dove, representing the Holy Spirit, and the Luminous Mystery may be represented by an illuminated image of the Eucharist. The user may activate the visual indication by contacting one of the switches **24a, 24d**, as noted above, via voice command,

as also noted above, or by contacting one of the sensors **24** carried by the transition beads **27**. Each of the transition beads **27** (also called decade beads) may represent one of the Mysteries.

[0038] The visual indication may also be text corresponding to a particular prayer. The text may be displayed on a text display **42** that is connected to the processor **35**. The text may, for example, include the text of a prayer corresponding to one of the Mysteries, as described above, or the text corresponding to a prayer to be recited when the user is adjacent one of the plurality of beads **22**. The text may also be an explanation of one of the Mysteries described above, if desired.

[0039] The audible/visual indicator **30** may also include a switch **44** for permitting user selection of at least one of the audible and visual indication. The switch **44** advantageously allows a user to customize use of the rosary **15** for different situations. For example, when the user is in a quiet environment, such as a church, it may be desirable to switch the audible/visual indicator **30** to a silent mode, i.e., only activate the visual indication in response to the sensors **24**.

[0040] Referring now additionally to FIGS. 3-4, another embodiment of the rosary **15'** is now described. In the second embodiment of the rosary **15'**, only an audible indicator **30'** is carried by the flexible elongate member **20'** for providing an audible indication based upon the sensors **24'**. The other aspects of the second embodiment of the rosary **15'** are similar to those of the first embodiment, are labeled with prime notation, and require no further discussion herein.

[0041] Referring now additionally to FIGS. 5-6, still another embodiment of the rosary **15"** is now described. In the third embodiment of the rosary **15"**, only a visual indicator **30"** is carried by the flexible

elongate member 20" for providing a visual indication based upon the sensors 24". The other aspects of the third embodiment of the rosary 15" are similar to those of the first embodiment, are labeled with double prime notation, and require no further discussion herein.

[0042] A method aspect of the present invention is for providing an audible indication relating to a rosary 15, 15'. As discussed above, the rosary 15, 15' comprises a flexible elongate member 20, 20', a plurality of beads 22, 22' carried thereby, a plurality of sensors 24, 24', and an audible indicator 30, 30' connected to the at least one sensor. The method comprises generating the audible indication from the audible indicator 30, 30' based upon the plurality of sensors 24, 24'.

[0043] Another method aspect of the present invention is for providing a visual indication relating to a rosary 15, 15". As also discussed above, the rosary 15, 15" comprises a flexible elongate member 20, 20" and a plurality of beads 22, 22" carried thereby, a plurality of sensors 24, 24", and a visual indicator 30, 30" connected to the plurality of sensors. The method comprises generating the visual indication from the visual indicator 30, 30" based upon the plurality of sensors 24, 24".

[0044] Many modifications and other embodiments of the invention will come to the mind of one skilled in the art having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed, and that modifications and embodiments are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims.